DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 420 EA 010 222

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TITLE Coping with Incompatible Expectations: An Integrated View of Role Conflict.
PUB DATE Sep 77
NOTE 45p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Personnel; *Administrator Role; *Chief Administrators; *Conflict; Group Relations; Institutional Administration; Management; Organizational Theories; *Organizations (Groups); Political Influences; *Research; *Role Conflict

ABSTRACT

This study collected data on the nature and effects of conflicting demands faced by directors of a sample of 69 manpower programs in New York State. Using an integrated macro (organizational) and micro (individual) approach to administrative behavior, the study focused on the difficulty experienced by institutional leaders in trying to satisfy multiple interest groups with conflicting demands to place on the organization. The study examined the effects on chief administrators of conflict between staff evaluations of organizational effectiveness and the number of clients processed (output). The data indicate that leaders facing conflicting expectations experienced significantly more role related difficulties than those leaders facing complementary expectations. (Author/DS)

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COPING WITH INCOMPATIBLE EXPECTATIONS:

AN INTEGRATED VIEW OF ROLE CONFLICT

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September, 1977

Comments from Howard Aldrich, Jean Bartunek, Manuel London, Michael Moch and anonymous reviewers on an earlier version of this paper have been most helpful.

Draft: Do not cite or quote. Comments welcomed.

EA 010 222

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the difficulty institutional leaders have satisfying multiple interest groups using an integrated macro and micro organizational behavior approach. It highlights the conflict between three of these interests and discusses the implications of these conflicts for decisions made by the institutional leaders regarding how the organization is to be structured and administered. In addition, the effects which the conflict between two of these interests (staff's evaluation of effectiveness and the number of clients processed) has on the role of the agency director are examined. It is shown that leaders facing conflicting expectations experienced significantly more role related difficulties than those leaders facing complementary expectations.

It is questionable whether organizational behavior has yet emerged as a separate discipline with a distinctive perspective for examining organizational phenomena. Most of the research conducted by members of organizational behavior departments in applied settings is hardly distinguishable from that which is published by their counterparts in psychology and sociology departments. While organizational behavior courses and their supporting textbooks generally reflect the hybrid nature of the field, very little organizational behavior research has adopted the integrated framework professed to be so important. In order for this to occur organizational behavior research must more readily merge the macro (organizational) and micro (individual) approaches inherited from our parent disciplines of sociology and psychology. Some truly integrated research is beginning to emerge in the literature,[1] but we have just begun to scratch the surface of potential opportunities. The purpose of this paper is to point out how research utilizing a combination of the micro and macro perspectives enhances our understanding of organizational processes.

One of the aspects of behavior within organizations which lends itself nicely to this framework is the problem of coping with conflicting expectations. This problem has been previously studied at both the organizational and individual levels of analysis. At the organizational level this problem is embodied in the political economy theory of organizations (Zald, 1970; Wamsley and Zald, 1973a; 1973b) which posits that organizations operate within an environment of multiple interest

groups which place conflicting demands on the organization. At the individual level the problems created by inter-sender role conflict have been well documented (cf., Gross et al., 1958; Kahn et al., 1964). However, a review of the literature in both areas points out the need for an integrated approach since there has been a tendency for the macro approach to focus only on the sources of conflict and the micro approach to focus only on the consequences of conflict.

Macro Approaches to the Study of Conflicting Expectations

Wamsley and Zald (1973a) proposed that,

> ...organizations exist in an immediate environment of users and suppliers, of interested and disinterested 'others'...[that] may be competitive, hostile, overseeing, etc.; [together they form] a policy subsystem which shapes the conditions of existence for an agency. (p. 64).

These interests within a policy subsystem affect the distribution of both political and economic resources required by public agencies. On the political side the members of the policy subsystem control legitimacy and power and therefore affect the propriety of an agency's existence. These "relevant others" also influence the arrangement of the division of labor between agencies and the allocation of economic resources to them. The central theme of this theory is that the administration of public agencies is a highly politicized enterprise. Political struggles between the focal agency and other interest groups within its policy subset result from efforts by external actors to influence the agency's niche and related goals and the agency's attempt to manipulate its relevant others in order to enhance its legitimacy and increase its share of the distribution of economic resources (Wamsley and Zald, 1973a).

The political economy model is closely related to the resource control theory of organizational effectiveness proposed by Yuchtman and Seashore (1967). The basic assumption underlying the resource control model is that critically needed resources are in short supply in the environment and consequently an organization's ability to survive and prosper is a function of its ability to outmanuever other organizations in the acquisition of these scarce resources. An effective organization, therefore, is characterized as having a strong bargaining position which enables it to dominate its environment. This power over the environment is based on the organization's ability to control such contingencies as: input acquisition, output disposal, capital acquisition, acquisition of production factors, and the acquisition of a labor force. (Jacobs, 1974).

These theories are compatible not only because they emphasize the importance of controlling environmental resources but also because both explicitly recognize that the environment is composed of a heterogeneous mix of interests. In rejecting the goal approach to organizational effectiveness, Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) pointed out that administrators must serve a multitude of different parties with conflicting criteria of organizational effectiveness. This criticism of the goal approach has been echoed by Perrow (1970) and Hannon and Freeman (1976). Rather than having single identifiable purposes, organizations consist of coalitions which are vying for control over the power to make policy decisions regarding the distribution of resources (Cyert and March, 1963; Thompson, 1967). Following this line of reasoning, it is more appropriate to speak of the

goals which individuals or groups, both inside and outside the organization, have for the organization's means than to refer to the organization's goals, per se. (Mohr, 1971)

To date, the political economy model has stimulated numerous research studies and theoretical articles which examine such things as the factors influencing whether organizations will engage in cooperative or conflictual relations (Hall et al., 1974) and the bases for the distribution of power and resources within (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1974; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974; and Pfeffer, 1976a) and between organizations (Jacobs, 1974; Schmidt and Kochan, 1976; Randall, 1973; Benson, 1975). These articles share the common orientation that conflicting interest groups work to affect the outcomes of an organization's decision-making process. However, this literature has almost totally ignored the effect which operating in a highly political context has on the roles of an organization's senior administrators. This is curious, since as Selznick (1957) pointed out, it is at the institutional level of management that the conflicts between internal and external interest groups converge most sharply.

The importance of Selznick's (1957) insight that senior administrators are responsible for coping with both the constraints of the organization's environment and the needs of lower participants has not been fully assimilated into the administration literature because generally the two responsibilities are treated as being separate and independent activities. For example, models designed to increase worker involvement and motivation (cf., Lawler, 1973) do not consider environmental conditions as constraints on the programs which top management can initiate. Similarly, one of the

shortcomings of the resource control model of effectiveness is that it does not adequately acknowledge the relationship between the efficiency of an organization's utilization of its resources and its needs to acquire resources. An organization which efficiently utilizes its resources can tolerate greater environmental dependence than one which is not as frugal.

It is interesting to note, however, that the importance of administrators being able to cope with multiple constraints is receiving an increased amount of attention in the organizational effectiveness literature (cf., Pennings and Goodman, 1976; Mott, 1972; Reimann, 1975; and Katz and Kahn, 1968). For instance, Pennings and Goodman (1976: 15) proposed that an organization is effective if "...relevant constraints can be satisfied and to the degree that organizational results approximate or exceed a set of referents for multiple outcomes."

A few studies have focused on an administrator's need to satisfy both internal and external constraints. For instance, a study of 97 companies by Freidlander and Pickle (1968) demonstrated the difficulty of this task since they reported generally low and many negative correlations between measures of how well the organization was satisfying each of seven different interests. In a study of general hospitals, Pfeffer (1973) found that the chief administrator and members of the hospital's board of directors were chosen for their ability to satisfy either the organization's needs for internal coordination or its needs for controlling sources of financial support in the environment. Unfortunately, while these studies describe several of the multiple constraints which institutional leaders face, neither of them examined the effects of role conflict on the administrators themselves.

Micro Approaches to the Study of Conflicting Expectations

Herein lies a major difference in the focus of the political economy literature and the research which has been conducted on role conflict. The advantage of the political economy model is that it provides us with a broad macro perspective for describing the sources of role conflict. However, writers in this area have tended to ignore the actual consequences of these conflicts for role occupants. Conversely, most of the work which has been done on the role conflicts experienced by boundary spanners has focused primarily on documenting the presence and assessing the consequences of conflict. Indeed, most of this research has tended to focus on two fairly specific issues: (1) Do boundary spanners experience more role conflict than non-boundary spanners? and (2) Does role conflict cause boundary spanners to have negative attitudes towards their role?

Regarding the first question, it has been shown rather conclusively that boundary spanners do indeed experience more role conflict than non-boundary spanners. Following the original observation to this effect by Kahn et al. (1964), several researchers have argued that one of the strongest determinants of conflict is the "boundary relevance" of a person's role (Adams, 1976; Organ, 1971; Organ and Green, 1972; Miles, 1976).[2] There is less conclusive evidence supporting the traditional position that since boundary spanners are exposed to more conflicting role expectations than non-boundary spanners they should report lower levels of job satisfaction. Recently this conclusion has been challenged by several authors who call attention to the positive, compensatory effects of boundary-spanning activities. Some of these include:

increased power stemming from greater control over information flowing into the organization, supportive relationships outside the organization, freedom from close supervision, and greater task variety (Keller et al., 1976; Pettigrew, 1972; Seiber, 1974; Aldrich and Herker, 1977).

For our purposes what is significant about this boundary spanning literature is the noticeable lack of interest in systematically exploring the sources of role conflict. Generally the level of role conflict is measured using self report data and little effort is made to trace the perceived conflict back to its roots in the larger organizational or interorganizational context. Ironically, one of the most comprehensive studies of role conflict was also one of the earliest. In their research on school principals, Gross et al. (1958) examined the conflicting expectations these administrators faced from eighteen different internal and external interest groups in making decisions on: (1) hiring and promotion of personnel, (2) allocation of the principal's after-school time, (3) teacher salary recommendations, and (4) budgetary recommendations. The 105 principals reported substantial role conflict for all four issues with the highest amounts for budget and salary recommendations. This study also reported that those principals experiencing role conflict had lower job and career satisfaction and worried more than those who did not have to cope with conflicting expectations.

There is some evidence that the broad perspective used by Gross and his associates is re-emerging in the literature. For instance, Miles and Perreault (1976) have recently proposed and tested a model of role conflict which includes both the antecedents and consequences of perceived conflict. In their model perceptions of conflict are held to be the result

of: (1) the importance of major role requirements, e.g., personnel supervision, integration and boundary spanning activities, or scientific research; and (2) the organizational distance and formal authority of role senders. In this same vein, Rogers and Molnar (1976), using a sample of directors of public agencies, showed that interorganizational factors such as organization autonomy, perceived pressure from outside sources, overlapping boards of directors, and interagency director-to-director contacts explained considerably more variance in the incidence of role conflict than intraorganizational variables such as the number of services provided, and the levels of formalization of rules and procedures and centralization of authority.

We feel that this expanding interest in examining both the antecedents and consequences of role conflict is extremely important because it highlights the complementarity between the macro and micro approaches to studying this phenomenon. By placing individual role conflicts in the broader context of the political economies of the organization, they take on an enriched meaning. As we develop a greater understanding of the conflict demands placed on an organization as a whole by multiple interest groups, we will gain deeper insights into the problems created when these incompatible demands become focused on any given position in the organization. As Miles and Perreault (1976) point out, people reporting identical levels of role conflict may feel differently about it and use very different strategies for coping with it, depending on the source of the conflict. Consequently, we feel that it is important for the analysis of a micro process, such as role conflict, to include an examination of how it fits into, and is shaped by, the organizational

dynamics within the broader macro context. By the same token, as stated earlier, we feel that discussion in the political economy literature of the conflicting environmental pressures faced by an organization would take on considerably more meaning if the consequences of these incompatible demands for the performance of individual roles within the organization were considered. In this study we will follow this approach, in the sense that we will examine the conflicts faced by the institutional heads of public service agencies within the context of the incompatible demands placed on their agency. This approach will hopefully give us a richer understanding of the consequences of these multiple demands being focused on this key administrative position.

The Study

This study collected data on the nature and effects of conflicting demands faced by directors of a sample of 69 manpower programs in New York State (Whetten, 1974). These agencies primarily serve as links between the poor, underprivileged and unemployed members of a community and the social service, vocational and educational training and employment opportunities provided by other public and private organizations. A more detailed description of these agencies is provided in Appendix 1.

Relevant interest groups for these organizations were the organization's staff, the local community leaders and the manpower agency's state and regional administration. These groups were chosen because they control political and economic resources essential for the effective operation of the organization. The importance of these three interest groups will be discussed in turn. First, in a social service agency it is not difficult

for disgruntled staff members to covertly restrict output by such means as misplacing clients' files (Blau, 1963). They can also reduce the quality of service provided by referring the client to the wrong agency or specifying the wrong type of training. Second, manpower organizations function primarily as a people-processing organization (Hazenfeld, 1972), utilizing a mediating technology (Thompson, 1967). Consequently, they are highly dependent on the leaders of other local organizations who provide training, education and employment opportunities for the manpower program's clients or who work directly with different groups of disadvantaged in the community. In this context, the importance of legitimacy as a political resource (Benson, 1975) is underscored since a negative evaluation by the heads of local organizations can seriously affect the flow of referrals into and out of the manpower agencies. Third, control over the financial resources required to operate the local manpower organizations is held by the central administration of federal and state manpower programs. At the time the data were collected funding for the local manpower agencies was received through categorical (program) channels, e.g., the Neighborhood Youth Corp in a local community received its operating funds from Washington via the regional Manpower Administration Office. As a result, the top level administrators of these programs were in a position to literally close down a local agency if they did not comply with program guidelines.

Information regarding the potential demands which these interest groups might exert on the heads of manpower organizations was collected by asking the organization's staff and community leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the agencies with which they were associated. We felt that this rating would reflect the political demands of these parties

because each has an interest in the effectiveness of these agencies. They are, therefore, likely to use their control over valued resources as leverage to increase the agency's effectiveness as they define it from their particular perspective. Consequently, if these interest groups report inconsistent evaluations of an organization this suggests that its leaders are facing conflicting pressures as they make decisions regarding the goals and policies of their program.

Data from the staff were gathered by asking all of the professional staff members to respond to the following question: "Overall how effective do you feel this organization is in fulfilling its mission as a manpower organization?" The rating by local community leaders came from a panel which consisted of the heads of seven key organizations. These were the Superintendent of Schools, Mayor, County Executive, or Chairman of the County Legislature, the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, the Commissioner of the County Social Services Department, the Director of the Community Action Agency (CAP), and the Secretariate of the local Comprehensive Area Manpower Planning Council (CAMPS). These leaders were selected for two reasons: (1) because of their familiarity with the operations of these organizations[3] and (2) because these leaders represented segments of the community which had a definite interest in the effectiveness of these agencies. The interests and concern of clients were represented by the Social Services Department, the CAP agency, the school system and the elected officials. The relationship with community organizations providing services utilized by the clients was represented by the Chamber of Commerce, the CAP agency, the CAMPS council, the public schools and elected officials. We therefore felt that these seven people

were in key positions in each community to receive feedback from the the members of the manpower organization's task environment and as such acted as important opinion leaders in the community. These leaders responded to the following question: "Considering all that you know about each of these organizations how would you rate their effectiveness in meeting the manpower needs of this area?"

Obtaining an evaluation from the state and/or regional leaders of these programs was more difficult. These leaders indicated that they did not have any type of formal rating (or ranking) of the local agencies and they were not willing to perform such an evaluation for our study. This reluctance was likely due to the uncertainty faced by the entire manpower system at this time. During the summer of 1973, Congress was preparing to pass a manpower revenue sharing bill which would dismantle the centralized categorical administrative and place the authority to fund manpower programs in the hands of local community leaders.[4] However, in our conversations with these administrators it became apparent that one of the primary evaluation tools they utilized in making funding allocations was the monthly reports submitted by each agency. This statistical report reflected the level of an agency's activity in such areas as: receiving referrals, processing clients using various throughput process (e.g., counselling, testing) and outputting clients via placement in employment or completion of training. Our supposition that these program administrators were relying on statistical reports to evaluate an agency's effectiveness is consistent with the observations of others regarding the process by which this type of public program is evaluated (Wilcox, 1969) and is borne out by this recent statement by a senior official in the Department of Labor,

"...CETA success will heretoforth be measured in terms of costs per unsubsidized placement" (Brandwein, 1975). The measure which state and regional administrators indicated would be the most appropriate indicator of the potential demands of this interest group was the number of outputs from each organization (e.g., placement in employment or training positions). An average of these figures for twelve months was calculated to control for seasonal fluctuations in the supply of inputs and demand for outputs caused by such things as seasonal employment opportunities and needs, and fluctuations in the availability of funding.

Results

Table 1 shows the relationship between the evaluations by the staff and community leaders and the output statistics. This indicates that there is a strong relationship between the staff's evaluation and an organization's output which suggests a strong conflict between the interests of internal members and external program administrators. Since the other two correlations are not statistically significant it appears that they are independent evaluation criteria. This suggests that while they do not represent antagonistic demands an administrator would still find it difficult at times to pursue both interests simultaneously.

Insert Table 1 About Here

From Table 1 we learn that it is difficult for an administrator to do whatever is necessary to produce a high volume of output and simultaneously meet the staff's criteria for an effective organization. However, this

information tells us very little about the nature of these antagonistic demands. To fully understand the consequences of this conflict of interests for administering these agencies we must be able to identify the staff's criteria for an effective organization as well as the organizational factors which contribute to high output and then determine which of these are in conflict. Conflicts between goals represent serious dilemmas for administrators when they involve antagonistic demands on the utilization of organizational means (e.g., to accomplish one objective the organization should be centralized; however, decentralization is necessary to reach another goal), otherwise, they are mere ideological disagreements. To determine whether the basic structural design and administrative procedures required to meet these three criteria of effectiveness are antagonistic, the three dependent variables were correlated with several key organizational characteristics. These included: (1) the amount of coordination and control (formalization of procedures, centralization of authority and communication), (2) staff training (years of education), (3) the manner in which work is processed internally during the throughput stage (variety of tasks, time spent processing each unit, task interdependence, number of services offered), (4) relationships with the environment (staff's rating of cooperation between manpower organizations in the community, size of the organization's set, concentration of the set, number of linkages with the seven community leaders used as raters), and (5) scale of operations (number of staff and occupational complexity). The specific operationalizations of these measures are included in Appendix 2.

The organizational characteristics associated with the three measures of effectiveness are shown in Table 2. Focusing on the community leaders' rating first, it appears that the manpower organization's visibility in the community is the best predictor of this rating. Organizations which had a large organization set that was widely dispersed across the eight categories of community organizations and included linkages with the organizations administered by the community leaders were rated as being most effective. Visibility may have also been enhanced by the cooperation within the manpower system of organizations since the absence of negative publicity regarding the "in-fighting" between manpower organizations may result in the community leaders evaluating the entire group of organizations as being effective. The staff's level of education may be viewed as an indicator of their competence and expertise. Since employees in this system of organizations are frequently drawn from the ranks of the underprivileged and uneducated, the presence of articulate, well-educated representatives should bolster the confidence of outsiders in the ability of the organization to competently service any clients referred to it and to make sound judgments regarding which of their clients should be referred to other local organizations. The correlation between formalization of rules and the community leaders' rating is somewhat surprising since this aspect of an organization is generally not highly visible to external observers. However, formalization of rules and policies may be acting as a surrogate measure for an overall bureaucratic approach to administering the agency. If this is the case then from the point of view of interacting organizations, this lack of flexibility may prove frustrating and result in a poor rating. This suggests the need to make a distinction between

mutual formalization of a relationship, which Aldrich (1976) has shown to be positively correlated with the number of referrals exchanged between agencies, and unilateral formalization of policies which creates problems for the interacting agencies.

Insert Table 2 About Here

The finding that community leaders based their judgment of the manpower organization's effectiveness primarily on the agency's visibility is consistent with Perrow's statement that: "Competence is hard to judge so we rely upon familiarity." (1972: 11) This principle seems especially appropriate for the public sector where there is a lack of hard criteria (e.g., stock prices and profits) for judging the effectiveness of an organization. It is especially difficult for an outsider to evaluate the quality of the primary characteristics of these agencies, i.e., the services they provide; hence, it is only natural for an external observer to focus on the organization's secondary characteristics, such as its visibility in the community.

As a test of this proposition we examined the community leaders rating of how familiar they were with each of the agencies they were evaluating. The alternative responses were: (1) I don't know anything about this organization; (2) I am somewhat familiar with this organization; (3) I am very familiar with this organization. The community leaders' average effectiveness rating for each of these three levels of familiarity were

2.2, 2.8, and 3.5 ($p = .01$). Consequently, it appears that visibility is a very important determinant of a social agency's legitimacy within its immediate environment.

The principal alternative explanation for these results is that these characteristics of manpower organizations enable them to successfully process many clients and this information is picked up by the community leaders via their contacts with their staff or clients whose interests they represent. However, if this were the case one would expect a high correlation between the community leaders' ratings and the agencies' level of output, which is not consistent with the results in Table 1.

The most striking feature of Table 2 is that the staff's rating and the measure of output are correlated with basically the same set of organizational characteristics but the signs of these correlations are opposite. Overall, it appears that an organically structured and administered organization is rated as most effective by the staff while a mechanistic (Burns and Stalker, 1961) organization has the greatest output. The staff rating of effectiveness is higher in an organization which is decentralized, provides the mechanisms for a high level of internal communication (staff meetings), is staffed by highly educated people who serve in a small number of occupational titles and who perform a wide variety of tasks that involve spending a considerable amount of time dealing with each client. These characteristics of the throughput process are at least partially due to the fact that the organization has instituted many supportive services, which are auxiliary to the main functions of the organization. The organizational members have also established a good working relationship with other manpower organizations.

In contrast, the organization which has a high level of output is characterized by a high level of centralization of authority and formalization of rules and procedures, a large number of staff who are not highly trained but are assigned to many occupational categories and who perform tasks with low variety which do not entail extensive contacts with clients, and, possibly because few auxiliary services are provided, require little coordination between members. The organization has also established a large network of relationships with other organizations in the community which presumably aids in obtaining inputs and disposing of the organization's outputs.

It is interesting to speculate regarding the source of this conflict between these interests. One of the more plausible explanations is that the organization's staff have been socialized into a professional ethic which places greater value on the quality of service provided rather than the quantity of clients processed. It follows that staff members with this orientation would prefer to work in an organization that is organically structured and administered since it would be more compatible with their values. This explanation is supported by an extensive body of literature dealing with the conflict between the goals of quality of production versus quantity of production in industrial administration (cf., Seashore, 1965; Freidlander and Pickle, 1968; and Mohr, 1973).

An alternative explanation stems from the work on cogniti[illegible] dissonance reduction (Festinger, 1957; Bem, 1967). This theory suggests that if the staff feel a strong pressure to evaluate their agency positively, then having done that they would look around for a justification of their rating. If they are aware that their organization is not processing a

large number of clients (relative to others in the sample of organizations), then they might conclude that since the organization is not a high producer it must be focusing on the quality of outputs. While it is not possible to reject either of these explanations with the data in this study, the first alternative appears to us to be a more plausible explanation.

Regardless of which explanation is correct, the results are very striking. There is a strong conflict between the interests of the staff members and the interests of central administrators in documenting the effect of their categorical program by citing the number of placements they have accomplished. While the policy and administrative implications of this finding are numerous, we will delay our discussion of them until after the next section.

Consequences of Role Conflicts

Recalling the theoretical perspective of this paper we have so far examined the political and economic context of these organizations and identified the conflicting expectations of different interest groups. If we were following a strictly macro approach we might conclude our analysis at this point with a statement to the effect that it is undoubtedly more difficult to administer an organization under these conditions. However, stopping at this point would truncate our analysis of this problem since we have not fully investigated the consequences of these conflicts on the role of the institutional leader. To do this we must shift our focus to a micro perspective and examine the consequences of these conflicts on the day-to-day activities of organizational administrators. For this type of analysis we divided our organizations into two groups depending

on whether their level of output and staff's evaluation were compatible or incompatible. We choose these two measures since they have a substantial negative intercorrelation which affects how many of the organization's means are to be utilized. We therefore felt that the interaction between them was most likely to have a significant impact on the administrator's role. Each of these measures was divided at its mean and then the organizations were classified into the resulting four cells with the High/Low and Low/High cells comprising the conflicting condition and the High/High and Low/Low cells comprising the complementary condition. This grouping resulted in a 34 to 33 split of the 67 organizations.

To determine the effects of intersender role conflict we asked each of the agency heads to describe the difficulty of their roles as administrators in terms of the level of uncertainty they faced, the routineness of their work, and the amount of control they had over their personal environments. Uncertainty was operationalized in terms of the predictability of their tasks, the time span of feedback and the extent to which it was necessary to plan ahead. The first two measures have been frequently used in studies of uncertainty (cf., Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Downey et al., 1975) and the third attempts to measure the extent to which an administrator must look far ahead to consider the ramifications of daily decisions. We predicted that administrators in the conflict condition would have to be more concerned about the long-range consequences of their actions than their counterparts in the complementary condition. Similarly, because of the increased complexity of the decision-making process in the conflict condition we predicted that these administrators would report a longer time span to receive feedback regarding the consequences of their decisions

and less certainty in their ability to predict the eventual outcome of these decisions. Task routinization was measured by the number of unique and troublesome problems the administrator encountered each day (Perrow, 1967; Lynch, 1974). Because of the numerous dilemmas suggested in Table 2, we expected that administrators in the conflict group would report more problems in their work than those in the complementary group. The final measure of role difficulty was the amount of control the administrators felt they had over the constraints within and outside the organization which affected their job performance. Worker autonomy has been examined previously by Hackman and Oldham (1976), Turner and Lawrence (1965), and Hage and Aiken (1967). Consistent with our other hypotheses we expected that administrators facing inconsistent role expectations would express less control over their environment than administrators facing compatible demands. The specific operationalizations of these six survey items are included in Appendix 3.

Table 3 points out very dramatically the effects of role conflict for these institutional leaders. Not only are the means for the six role difficulty measures all significantly different from one another, but in addition, our expectations regarding the direction of the differences are all confirmed. It appears that serving as the head of an organization where there is either a high staff evaluation and a low output of clients or a low staff evaluation and high output of clients is a much more difficult task than the case in which you have similar levels on both dimensions.

Insert Table 3 About Here

By collapsing our 2 x 2 table into two cells (conflict and complementary) we are masking any interaction effects between organization's output and staff evaluation for the six role characteristics. Even though the independent variables are moderately correlated, there may be a significant interaction between them. To test for this possibility, we performed an analysis of variance test on the entire 2 x 2 table (with unequal cell sizes). Table 4 shows the cell means and the analysis of variance results for the six role characteristics. While it is disappointing that the interaction terms for only three of the analyses were significant, there is a strong pattern in the ranking of the cell means in Table 4 which supports our grouping the "interaction" cells together. This conclusion is based on the fact that in Table 4 the means for the conflict cells (#2 and #3) are higher than the means for the complementary cells (#1 and #4) for five out of the six role characteristic variables.

Insert Table 4 About Here

A closer examination of these cell means uncovers two additional findings that should be highlighted. First, it is interesting to note that the High output/Low staff evaluation cell (#2) had the highest mean for five out of six variables. This suggests a possible dysfunctional consequence of public policies which emphasize or reinforce a high volume of outputs. Others have expressed concern that this orientation is not in the best interests of the clients being served by our public institutions (Wilcox, 1969), but this study has focused on a different implication of being overly numbers conscious, namely the effect it has on the role of

the agency administrator. Part of the reason why this particular type of conflict seems to be so problematic for an administrator is that it is very difficult to resolve. The alternatives are to raise the evaluation of the staff, which is presumably related to their professional orientation, or to decrease the volume of production. The staff's evaluation can be changed by lowering the professionalism of the staff through the hiring selection process. Unfortunately, this goes against the current trend of increasing the professionalism of social service agency employees and would therefore likely decrease the agency's legitimacy with community leaders and clients. On the other hand, if the agency head chooses to reduce output there is the possibility of incurring negative sanctions from the program's central administration which controls the primary source of financial support for the local agency.

The second particularly striking result in Table 4 is that both of the conflict cells have higher mean values than the Low output/Low staff evaluation cell (#1). This is a very interesting result since it appears that the condition of Low output and Low evaluation is less problematic for administrators than either of the two conflict conditions. This suggests that when there is agreement between various interests that the org nization is doing poorly, at least in the public sector where there is relatively low risk of actually going out of business, the day-to-day tasks of administration are less difficult to manage than when the administrator is faced with inconsistent evaluations of effectiveness. In discussing this counter-intuitive result with colleagues, it was suggested that maybe the agency heads in the Low/Low condition did not link the effects of negative evaluations from their staff and program

administrators with the characteristics of their role because they were not expressly involved in their position as agency head. This idea was consistent with our observations that there was a group of manpower agency heads who had a long history of moving from one public program to another as openings with opportunities for advancement became available. These people typically were natives of the community and utilized their connections with "old chums" for upgrading their employment. These leaders typically spent less time than normal administering their agency and seemed to be less involved in the "cause" of providing training and employment to the underprivileged. Under these conditions disagreements with the staff of the unfavorable evaluations by the regional administrators might be dismissed as unimportant if these leaders could fall back on the support of their primary reference group--their associates who were the heads of other local organizations. As a test of this explanation, we compared the community leaders' ratings of the agencies in each of the four cells and indeed found that those in the Low/Low cell were rated highest ($F = 2.78$, $p = .05$). While this provides an interesting insight into the political nature of administering federally sponsored social service programs at the grass roots level, our analysis should be treated with some caution due to the small number of cases in this cell.

Summary and Conclusions

The fundamental purpose of this paper was to demonstrate the value of utilizing an incegrated approach for studying the problem of coping with conflicting expectations. In this regard we have identified the sources of conflicting expectations experienced by the administrators

of social service agencies as well as their consequences for the administrators' role performance. We feel that this approach has produced a richer understanding of the dilemmas experienced by public administrators than would have resulted from a more traditional micro or macro analysis.

To recapitulate, while it does not appear that agency directors are facing a strong conflict between establishing lateral relations with community leaders and satisfying the interests of staff members or hierarchical administrators, it clearly is not possible to fulfill all of these expectations simultaneously. Inasmuch as it appears that an agency's legitimacy as an effective social program in the community is largely a function of its visibility to community leaders, it follows that an agency's image is to some extent based on the amount of time staff members spend in community-based activities. These may be job related, such as participating in social service coordination councils and contacting other organizations to establish client exchanges, but in addition it has been shown that engaging in non job-related activities such as voluntary associations, fraternal clubs, and community interest groups also increases the integration of an agency within the network of community organizations (Perrucci and Pilisuk, 1970; Whetten and Aldrich, 1977). These activities are likely to consume some on-the-job time but more importantly because they provide frequent interaction with other community members they will likely reinforce the staff's orientation towards quality of service because of their increased identification with the needs and problems of community members. These external activities are therefore basically incompatible with the orientation of the vertical program administrators who emphasize cost efficiency and volume of output.

The evidence from this study for a conflict between the expectations of systemic leaders (high volume of output) and the organization's staff (high quality of service) is very strong. We have not only shown that agency heads are facing a definite conflict in trying to satisfy these interests but, in addition, we have highlighted some of the consequences of this role conflict for the work performed by the administrator. For instance, we have shown that it creates a number of administrative dilemmas for the agency head. As an example, if he increases opportunities for professional training the staff will be satisfied but the volume of work output will decrease, and if he centralizes the decision-making process output will go up but satisfaction will go down. We further showed that these dilemmas lead administrators who were facing incompatible demands to describe their role as highly unpredictable, with long delays in feedback on performance and necessitating considerable long-range planning. They further reported encountering a large number of problems and in general they felt like they had little control over both internal and external constraints.

We feel the integrated approach advocated in this paper has been particularly well suited for studying the dynamics of boundary spanning roles. Typically studies of boundary spanning roles simply compare the amount of role conflict reported by boundary spanners versus non-boundary spanners and then show that this is related to the subjects' feelings towards their roles. By examining the sources of conflicts experienced by boundary spanners, we are better able to understand the factors producing the expressions of frustration and low job satisfaction by boundary spanners which have been frequently reported in the literature. While our study

would have been strengthened by self report measures of role conflict and job satisfaction, our results show that administrators in the role conflict condition are clearly describing their role "as if" they are facing conflict. This is likely due to the fact that the demands made by the interest groups we examined are highly visible and very pressing in these organizations.

This research has also added to our understanding of the role of institutional leader--a position which is receiving an increased amount of attention (cf., Pfeffer, 1976b). The nature of the pressures from internal and external interests which are focused on this role make it a unique boundary spanning position which deserves further investigation. Our examination of the amount, and consequences, of role conflict faced by heads of social service agencies will hopefully stimulate more research in this area. A particularly attractive topic for future research is the strategies used by institutional leaders for reducing role conflict. For this purpose alternatives suggested by Parsons (1951), Merton (1957), and Kahn et al. (1964) would provide a sound basis for investigation.

TABLE 1

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE POTENTIAL DEMANDS OF THREE INTEREST GROUPS

	1.	2.	3.
1. Staff's Evaluation	--		
2. Community Leaders' Evaluation	.15	--	
3. Agency's Output	-.42***	-13	--

N = 69

*** = .001

TABLE 2

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THREE POTENTIAL DEMANDS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Organizational Characteristics		Potential Demand		
		Rating by Panel of Community Leaders	Rating of Organization's Staff	Organization's Output (Training & Placement)
Coordination and Control	Formalization	-.28		31
	Centralization		-.25	41
	Communication		24	
Staff Training	Level of Professional Training	.29	25	-25
Word Processing (throughput)	Task Variety		46	-23
	Time Spent Processing Each Client		30	-48
	Task Interdependence			-28
	Number of Services Offered		23	-42
Scale	Occupational Complexity		-25	45
	Organizational Size			23
Relationships With Environment	Cooperation Between Manpower Organizations	.20	41	
	Organization Set Size	.20		23
	Organization Set Concentration	-28		
	Linkage With Community Leaders	22		

Only statistically significant correlations are reported.

$p < .10$ = r of .20
$p < .05$ = r of .25
$p < .01$ = r of .32
N = 69

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WHETHER LEADERS FACE
CONFLICTING DEMANDS OR COMPATIBLE DEMANDS
AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR ROLE

Role Characteristic	Compatible Demand	Conflicting Demand	T-Statistic
A. Unpredictability of Causal Relations	1.71 (low)	2.82 (high)	1.95**
B. Necessity of Long Range Planning	2.47 (short)	3.88 (long)	2.79***
C. Feedback Time	2.27 (short)	3.55 (long)	2.79***
D. Number of Problems Encountered	1.82 (few)	2.70 (many)	1.93**
E. Lack of Control Over External Constraints	2.88 (low)	4.52 (high)	2.74***
F. Lack of Control Over Internal Constraints	1.91 (low)	2.85 (high)	1.81**

** $p < .05$
*** $p < .01$

N = 69

TABLE 4

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR ROLE CHARACTERISTICS

IN FOUR DIFFERENT DEMAND CONDITIONS

Role Characteristics	Cell Means	ANOVA F Statistic
A. Unpredictability of Causal Relations	1 = 3.17 2 = 2.27 3 = 3.91 4 = 1.39	A = .77 B = 9.09** AxB = 1.54
B. Necessity of Long Range Planning	1 = 2.67 2 = 4.09 3 = 3.46 4 = 2.43	A = 4.30** B = .03 AxB = 4.06**
C. Feedback Time	1 = 1.83 2 = 3.54 3 = 3.54 4 = 2.36	A = .04 B = 1.07 AxB = 6.76**
D. Number of Problems Encountered	1 = 2.00 2 = 2.77 3 = 2.54 4 = 1.77	A = 1.76 B = .12 AxB = 1.96
E. Lack of Control Over External Constraints	1 = 3.67 2 = 4.68 3 = 4.18 4 = 2.71	A = 5.04** B = .61 AxB = 3.01*
F. Lack of Control Over Internal Constraints	1 = 1.50 2 = 3.14 3 = 2.27 4 = 2.00	A = .15 B = 1.20 AxB = .23

A = Output
B = Staff's Evaluation

Cells: 1 = Low A Low B (N = 6)
2 = Low A High B (N = 22)
3 = High A Low B (N = 11)
4 = High A High B (N = 28)

*p < .10
**p < .05
***p < .01

N = 69

FOOTNOTES

[1]Cf., Rousseau's (1977) work on job design and organizational structure, Hickson et al. (1971), and White's (1974) discussion of dependence and power and Van de Ven's (1976) model for organizational research.

[2]While Keller and Holland (1975, 1976) have reported no difference in role conflict between boundary spanners and non-boundary spanners, there is some concern that their results may be influenced by their using an informational, as compared with a representational, operationalization of boundary spanning (cf., Organ, 1976; and Miles, 1976).

[3]During the year preceding the study we interviewed the heads of each of the manpower agencies to determine who in the local community was most closely associated with their activities and these seven organizations were among the most frequently mentioned.

[4]Under this plan local public officials could elect to fully fund, modify or totally eliminate the current categorical programs in their community. This manpower revenue sharing bill was passed in the form of the C mprehensive Education and Training Act (CETA).

APPENDIX I

Program Descriptions

OJT (On the Job Training): The OJT programs in the study were all federally funded and operated out of the district office of the State Employment Service. It is designed to place disadvantaged workers in jobs in private businesses where they receive training on the job and eventually move into a regular job slot. During the training period their wages are subsidized by the OJT program.

MDT Training Centers: MDT Training Centers were begun under the Manpower Development and Training Act to give vocational training to disadvantaged workers who wished to learn a new skill or upgrade the skills they had previously learned. Most Centers offer at least five different kinds of training, ranging from skilled mechanic classes to registered nurses training. Some also include prevocational skills for workers with little education or unsatisfactory work habits. Certification of eligibility for training and placement in jobs after training are handled by local Employment Service offices, sometimes with an office on the premises.

NYC (Neighborhood Youth Corps): NYC programs are the most homogeneous category of manpower programs in our study, as most perform only one function: finding jobs for youth aged 16 to 21 in nonprofit public and private organizations, although some do provide counseling services. The largest component of NYC is the In-School and Summer employment program which serves in-school

youth from families below the poverty line. Most NYC programs are affiliated with local OEO-CAP agencies.

Local Employment Service Offices: The final component of the manpower training system studied is the local Employment Service office in each urban community. Although federally funded, the Employment Service is operated on a state-by-state basis and its structure varies across the states. Employment Service offices are to provide testing, placement, and job market information to all persons seeking employment, although in practice they serve mainly the disadvantaged and persons without access to other channels of employment information.

APPENDIX II

Organizational Characteristics

Formalization: An index composed of the organization's standardized scores regarding the presence or absence of: 1. An organization chart, 2. Written contracts of employment, and 3. Written records of job performance. The latter two variables were scored on the basis of whether they were available for administrators and supervisors only, or for all non-clerical personnel.

Centralization: The staff members' average response regarding how often they participated in making the following decisions: 1. To promote any of the non-clerical staff, 2. To hire new staff members, 3. To adopt new policies, and 4. To adopt new programs. Responses were coded on a 5 point scale from "Never" to "Always."

Communications: The number of regularly scheduled meetings within an organization per month. This variable was logged because of its highly skewed distribution.

Professional Training: The average number of years of education of the staff members.

Task Variety: Staff's average response to: "Would you describe your job as having little variety in it, or a lot of variety?" Responses were scored on a 7 point scale from "Little variety" to "A lot of variety."

Time Spent Processing Each Client: Staff's average response to: "How much time does it usually take you to perform one unit or work, e.g., provide services to one client, process or investigate one claim, or solve one problem?" Response alternatives were: 1. One hour or less, 2. Half a day or less, 3. One working day or less, 4. 2-3 days or less, 5. One week or less, 6. 2-3 weeks or less, and 7. Several weeks.

Task Interdependence: Staff's average response to the following question: "Work can flow through a work unit in several different ways. Three of these ways are depicted in the following illustrations. Place a check under the diagram which best depicts the flow of work through your work unit." Alternative responses were three diagrams with the following captions: 1. Work does not flow between unit members, 2. Work flows between members, but in only one direction, and 3. Work flows between members in a reciprocal manner.

Number of Services Offered: Staff members were asked to identify the services offered by their organization from the following list: Outreach, Intake and assessment or diagnosis, Orientation of clients or program participants, Basic education, Work skill training, On-the-job training with the organization, On-the-job counseling or supervision (at sites in

APPENDIX II
(Continued)

other organizations), Counseling, Supportive services (e.g., day care centers, transportation), Job development (solicitation of job openings), Sending referrals for job placement, Sending referrals to other organizations to receive personal services, Follow up on referrals, and Research and planning. This variable was logged.

Occupational Complexity: On the basis of their job titles and a description of the tasks they performed, staff members were placed into eight categories: Administration, Basic Education Instructors, Work Skills Instructors, Guidance and Counseling, Interviewers, Job Placement and Development, Social Workers and Community Organizers, and Staff positions (e.g., publicity, evaluation, training, research). The number of different categories represented was used as the organization's score.

Organizational Size: The number of staff in an agency. Part-time members were counted on the basis fo the fraction of full-time which they worked in the organization.

Cooperation Between Manpower Organizations: The staff's average response to: "Overall how much cooperation is there among the manpower organizations in this area?" Responses were coded on a 7 point scale from "Very little cooperation" to "High degree of cooperation."

Organization Set Size: This is the total number of organizations in the local community with which the focal organization interacted. This number was obtained by compiling a list of all known public and non-profit organizations in the local community over a two year period. We then asked the director of each manpower organization to identify those organizations on the list with which his organization had any of the following types of relationships: 1. Send referrals to, 2. Receive referrals from, or 3. "Other" type of relationship, e.g., funding, shared office space and/or personnel. For a more complete description of this and the organization set size variable, see Whetten and Aldrich (1976).

Organization Set Concentration: All of the organizations in the organization set were classified into nine categories referred to as community sectors. These included Education training and employment organizations, Public safety organizations, Medical and Health care organizations. The concentration of an organization set was calculated using the "H" measure of concentration which is the sum of the squared percentages of organizations in each of the eight community sectors.

Linkage with Community Leader's Organization: Each of the community leader's organizations could be identified in the focal organization's set. This variable is therefore the number of the 7 community leader's organizations with which each manpower organization had interacted.

APPENDIX III

Agency Head's Role Characteristics

Predictability of Cause and Effect Relationships: "In some organizations things are fairly predictable--if you do this, that will happen. In others you are often not sure whether something will work or not. What percentage of the time would you say that you are not sure whether something you do will work out?" Response alternatives were 9 increments of percentages from "10% or less" to "90% or more."

Necessity to Plan Ahead: "How far ahead do you find it necessary to plan your work?" Response alternatives were: 1. About one day, 2. Less than one week, 3. Less than 2-3 weeks, 4. Less than one month, and 5. Several months.

Feedback Time: "In terms of the major tasks you are assigned, on the average how long is it before you know whether your work effort is successful?" Response alternatives were: 1. Within a day, 2. Within a week, 3. Within 2-3 weeks, 4. Within a month, and 5. Several months.

Number of Exceptions Encountered: "During the course of your work how often do you come across specific but important problems that you don't know how to solve, and you have to take some time to think them through by yourself or with others before you take action?" Response alternatives were: 1. Daily, 2. 2-3 times a week, 3. Once a week, 4. 2-3 times a month, and 5. Once a month or less often. The scoring on this variable was reversed.

Lack of Control Over External Factors: "How much control do you personally feel you have over factors external to the organization which affect your ability to perform your job?" Responses were coded on a 7 point scale from "A great deal of control" to "Very little control."

Lack of Control Over Internal Factors: "How much control do you personally feel you have over factors within the organization which affect your ability to perform your job?" Responses were coded on a 7 point scale from "A great deal of control" to "Very little control."

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